



# Commandant's NOTE

MAJOR GENERAL KENNETH C. LEUER    Chief of Infantry

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## COMBAT TRAINING CENTERS In Support of Training Excellence

The single most important daily activity of the United States Army is its preparation for war. To the infantryman, this means tough, realistic, and focused training.

To assist the commander in this critical effort, the Army has provided not only doctrinal guidance on training philosophy and principles but also the procedures required to implement this philosophy—the training process and the training management cycle. These are proven methods for identifying critical points in training and for focusing our efforts and limited training resources on them. Proper employment of the process will contribute to the accomplishment of the intended outcome—success in battle.

Thus, the training doctrine to be incorporated into FM 25-100, Training the Force, and supplemental manuals, along with school-developed ARTEP Mission Training Plans and drills, provide not only the philosophy and principles for training but also the “nuts and bolts” required to implement them.

The Army's philosophy of “training as a way of life” is nowhere better demonstrated than at the combat training centers (CTCs). Here, the philosophy and principles of training are inculcated throughout the planning, execution, and evaluation phases of the CTC training process. The newest of the training centers, the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, focuses on light force operations. Based upon lessons learned in the development of the National Training Center (NTC), the JRTC serves as a useful example of the training center as an agent of change.

The FM 25-100 process is implemented at the JRTC through the interaction of the training unit chain of command, the training center, and the schools. The first step in this process is the establishment of the battle focus by the division commander, beginning with a thorough mission analysis. This analysis results in a stated mission.

Concurrently, the division and subordinate unit com-

manders develop a comprehensive task list based upon all possible missions and requirements. A filter test is then applied. The tasks that support the stated mission are classified as “mission and essential tasks.” The resulting Mission and Essential Task List (METL) is the foundation for the unit's training efforts. Each echelon in the division prepares its own METL, and care is taken to insure that the METL of each echelon interfaces with that of the next higher echelon. The METL also serves as the point of departure for the interface of the training unit and the training center.

Approximately six months before a unit's deployment, the JRTC dispatches a group of representatives to the training unit's home station. The primary purpose of this visit is to determine the unit's training objectives. These will be used by the training center to develop the scenario the unit will see later at Fort Chaffee. Division, brigade, and battalion commanders all participate in this process. Then, from the battalion commander's METL, the collective tasks are selected that, in the view of all three commanders, are most important and can best be used for training at the JRTC. These, in turn, are assigned priorities and the most important are selected for use at the training center.

Specific conditions are applied to the selected tasks. Unit input is critical in this regard. Specifics, such as the opposing force (OPFOR) and the terrain and visibility conditions, are determined in the greatest detail possible. To ensure consistency, standards—if they are not already available in a Mission Training Plan (MTP)—are developed by the training center in coordination with the proponent schools. When put together, these tasks, conditions, and standards form the training objectives for a particular rotation.

The training objectives, in turn, drive the scenario. Therefore, every scenario at the JRTC is different even though basic operations and missions may be similar from one rotation to another.



The JRTC team takes the commander's training objectives and returns to home station to develop the general scenario and sequence of events. This product is subsequently staffed through various TRADOC agencies and schools approximately 90 days before the rotation. Division and brigade commanders are also given an opportunity to review the conceptual scenario to ensure its adequacy in meeting the stated training objectives.

Once the basic scenario has been approved, brigade orders, overlays, and fragmentary orders are produced to support it. Once again, these products are staffed for accuracy and completeness. When this process has been completed, the training plan for the rotation is prepared.

The execution phase of training at the CTCs, and especially at the JRTC, is an example of the principles of training at work. The mission is focused because of the extensive preparation effort by both the training center and the unit; accordingly, the execution phase provides the most realistic training available to a unit, short of war. All operations are executed in an environment that requires a joint and a combined arms team effort since the OPFOR has goals and counterobjectives that, if successfully accomplished, will defeat a Blue Force.

OPFOR units operating under similar, although sometimes different, constraints from those of the Blue units, force a training unit to demonstrate initiative and resourcefulness in order to win. Constructive credit is not given to either side. If ammunition does not arrive, weapons don't fire. If casualties are not evacuated, they "die" of wounds. Leaders are frequently casualties, which tests the resourcefulness and training of the junior leaders who are called upon to replace them. Subjective judgment is reduced to a minimum through the full-up use of MILES in all training.

The evaluation of training at the training center is continuous throughout the execution phase. Each mission or task is evaluated using training and evaluation outlines (TEOs) that list the task, the conditions under which it is to be performed, the standards that must be met for success, and the subtasks and standards that are component parts of the major task. The latter grouping indicates the strengths and weaknesses of the unit in overall task performance.

These doctrine-based TEOs provide the foundation for the after action review (AAR) at the conclusion of each mis-

sion. The AAR process gives the unit feedback on mission performance and is provided vertically to all echelons from squad and platoon through battalion task force by highly trained and motivated observer-controllers (OCs). Systems AARs, aimed at the effectiveness of each of the seven operating systems, are also provided to the task force, with the battalion task force maneuver AAR being the "capstone" review involving commanders and staff members.

The AAR process provides timely, accurate, and detailed feedback to the leader at each echelon as to which elements of his unit need training on which tasks, thereby providing him a focus for subsequent home station training. AAR feedback is generated through unprecedented instrumentation capabilities that include both audio and video dimensions.

AARs are documented in a take-home package that includes videotapes of battalion task force AARs, systems AARs, and selected company AARs. Additionally all documents relating to the specifics of unit performance (standards met or not met and battle damage assessment, for example) and a grade-out on training proficiency on each mission (*trained, needs practice, untrained*) are provided. This documentation gives the unit a snapshot of its training proficiency that cannot be duplicated at its home station in terms of depth and objectivity. Using the information provided in the take-home package, and also its own first-hand experience, the unit re-enters the training management cycle by reassessing its ability to execute the unit METL. From this assessment, the unit can determine new training requirements that will then drive the design and development of its future training programs and plans.

Providing his unit the best training possible is the obligation of every leader. The combat training centers serve as models for the fulfillment of this obligation. Training to standards can frequently be a painful process. It can in no way compare, however, to the agony that follows battlefield defeat or the lack of professionalism associated with the loss of lives due to inadequate preparation.

The combat training centers focus on performing war-time missions to high and objective standards under the most realistic conditions possible. They continue to set the example for planning, executing, and evaluating training throughout the Army.

